

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the

K I N G,

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KING'S College Chappel in

C A M B R I D G E,

On Sunday *October* the 6th 1717.

By *RICHARD LAUGHTON*, D.D.
and Fellow of CLARE HALL.

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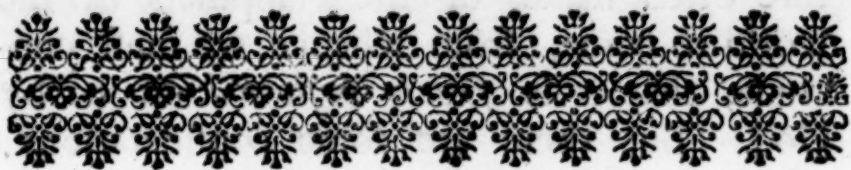
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ROM. VI. 23.

*The Gift of God is Eternal Life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

THE *Apostle* in these words represents the future happiness of Christians, as a thing that is *freely given* 'em by God, out of his mere good Will, and Grace, and Favour. He considers in the preceding verses God and Sin as two very different Masters, whom men may be in Subjection, and pay Obedience to, and he gives a description of that which they receive from each of 'em for their Service. That indeed, which the Servants of Sin receive is express'd by a word, which imports that it is *due* to them. The *wages* of Sin is Death; but that which those receive, who obey God, is stil'd χάρισμα τοῦ Θεοῦ, a *Gift* or *Donative* of God, an Act of his *free Grace and Bounty*.

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This is the representation, which the Scripture often makes of the Happiness of the world to come, from whence we must conclude, that it is *freely bestow'd* on us by God. But there are some considerations, which it may come under, that may incline us perhaps to think otherwise of it, and may seem to contradict the *Apostle's* doctrine in my Text; the Happiness I say, which we expect in the other World, in some ways that it may be consider'd, may seem to be of another Sort, and not in the nature of a *Gift*. In speaking therefore to these Words, I shall

I. Enquire what Difficulty there is in conceiving our future Happiness to be *the Gift of God*.

II. Endeavour to shew that it is notwithstanding *truly*, and *really* so, and that upon several accounts.

As to the First particular, I shall take it for granted, that those, who duly consider things, cannot be prejudic'd against the Truth deliver'd in my Text, by thinking that the Happiness of Heaven is *due* to us from God, upon account of the Service which we pay Him, that we have fully deserv'd it at his hands, and that he cannot deny it us without being

being unjust. This is an Opinion, which sprung doubtless at first from the Pride and Vanity of mens Hearts, from a careless overlooking the Infirmities of humane Nature, the defects and imperfections of our best Actions, the great part the Grace of God has in them, the vast disproportion betwixt the Work and the Reward; and was afterwards kept up and carried on to serve the ends of Superstition and Avarice, in the most corrupt Age and State of the Christian Church. I shall not therefore think it necessary, in order to make good the *Apostle's* assertion, to set my Self to confute what is maintain'd by the *Church of Rome* concerning the *Merit* of good Works. The difficulty, which I shall propose is of another Sort, drawn from the *Nature* of Virtue and Vice, and the *natural* effects and consequences of them.

It is a true observation, which constant experience attests, that Good and Bad actions have a *natural* influence upon men, that they Change and Mould and Frame their Tempers, breed lasting dispositions in them, and bring them to a fixt and permanent State of that Happiness or Misery, which as men we are capable of. Hence, as a consequence of this, it has generally with Good reason been thought,

that Good men, by a life of Holiness and Vertue upon Earth, grow *naturally* up into Heaven; that by living Well in this World, they secure to themselves the Happiness of the Next, according to the ordinary course of things, by a *natural* connexion of Cause and Effect.

The objection that may be made against this is, that these dispositions, which the course of mens Actions produces in them, may all be resolv'd into those changes that are wrought in their Bodies. It may be pretended, that the *animal Spirits*, or whatever else is the instrument of Sense and passion in us, having been long accustomed to move one way, go for that reason more easily into those beaten Tracks, than into new and untrod Paths; and in this alone it is that those habits of Vertue and Vice consist, which we perceive in our Selves at present, which consequently must needs cease, when our Souls are Separated from our Bodies, the cause of 'em being remov'd and gone.

But in reference to this it may be consider'd that, tho' in our present condition the Body has a great Power over the Soul, yet it seems very unreasonable to ascribe all Vertues
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and Vices whatsoever to the influence of it. There seems at first sight to be a manifest difference amongst 'em in this respect, in relation to the causes, from whence they spring. Thus, for instance, tho' we should grant that our Fear and Love of *Visible* and *Sensible* objects might proceed from the Motion of our Blood and Spirits, yet it wou'd be unreasonable to derive from thence our Dread of *invisible* Powers, our Fear of God, our Love of such a *Spiritual* Being, whose Perfections cannot affect our Senses, and much more our Patience, our Submission to Him, and Resignation of our Selves to his holy Will. These Vertues may much more reasonably be ascrib'd to the Exercise of our *intellectual* Faculties, to our Contemplation of the Glory of God, of his Divine Excellencies and Perfections, and rational Reflections made upon them. So likewise, tho' it must be granted, that Men are at first prompted, and by degrees habituated to Intemperance, Lust, and Anger, by the disorderly Motions of the Body, and consequently the Vertues contrary to these consist mainly in the mortifying of *That* and *keeping it under*, as the *Apostle* speaks; yet this cannot so truly be said of Humility, of Contentedness in all conditions, and many other Vertues, which respect our Selves. These

seem much rather to be owing to consideration and thought, than any *corporeal impressions*. The same may likewise be observ'd of our Duty to our Neighbour; for tho' we may be dispos'd to relieve his *Bodily* wants by Pity and Compassion, and such like Affections in us, yet in the exercise of Truth and Justice, and even *Charity* to Mens *Souls* (which is the Greatest and Noblest part of it) the Body seems to have no great share. These Vertues are the dictates of our Reason and Conscience, our natural Sentiments of Good and Evil pursu'd, and put in practise, and not the Effect of Matter in us.

But put the case, that all our Vertue did proceed from the influence of our *Bodies* on our Souls, yet even hence it wou'd not follow, that it needs must cease when the *Body* was gone. For certainly our Souls, (as all other spiritual Substances, except God,) are of a mutable Nature, and changes may be wrought in 'em, by *corporeal actions*, either for the Better or the Worse, which may be *permanent* and *durable*. We know not indeed how our Bodies and they can affect each other, and it may perhaps be thought, that Substances of so very different Natures cannot act upon one another by any proper efficiency

ency, but that Thoughts arise in our Minds upon some certain Motions in our Bodies, as a Condition only, or *causa sine quâ non*, by the mere Will and Pleasure of God. But this is however evident, that we may as well Understand how the Body should have a *permanent* and *lasting*, as a *short* and *transient* effect upon the Soul, the one may as easily be conceiv'd as the other, and they may both of 'em with equal reason be resolv'd into those arbitrary Laws the Creator has fix'd betwixt 'em.

And that thus it *really* is with us, that the *Body* has a *lasting influence* on the mind, we seem to have some evidence from experience and matter of fact. There are many bad dispositions in Men, arising confessedly from *bodily impressions*, which continue and remain in them, when the cause is in a great measure remov'd. Thus in Sickneſs, which impairs their natural Strength, altho' indeed in the extremity of it the Mind, (that can attend but to one thing at once,) seems affected with nothing but Pain, yet, when the Fit is a little over, many ſuch Evil inclinations appear and ſhew themſelves, before their Spirits are return'd to their wonted Force and Vigor, and are in a Capacity to raiſe thoſe deſires.

desires. The same thing may be observ'd of old Age, in which condition Men often retain a great Love and Relish of their former vicious Pleasures, when they are no longer able to enjoy them, when the force of their *Bodies* is in great measure spent, and cannot well be suppos'd to suggest those thoughts. This therefore seems to be something inherent in the Soul, a certain *Contagion* communicated to it by a long conversation with the Body, which since we see neither Age nor Sickness, nor such Decays of nature, as seem to loosen the Soul from the Body, and are as 'twere so many Steps to, and degrees of Separation, can extinguish or remove, there is reason to think that neither will *Death* be able to do it; this is at least a shrew'd presumption that men will carry it with them into the other World. And since it is thus in *vicious Habits*, which are communicated from the Body to the Soul, why should not the same be true of *Vertue* also, tho' that were suppos'd to proceed from the same Cause?

We see therefore what is the true nature of Vertue, and Vice, they are different States and Conditions of the Soul, into which it is gradually brought by a long course and series of Good or Bad actions, which have a *lasting*
and

and *permanent* effect upon the Mind. And since Happiness always goes along with a virtuous disposition, and Misery with Vice, we see likewise the *Natural* Connexion betwixt the practise of Religion in this Life, and the Enjoyment of the Glories of that which is to come. Good men who have work'd themselves up to a *Heavenly* frame of Spirit, even before they leave this *Earth* may in some Sense be said to be in *Heaven*; and that which has often been observ'd, must needs also be true, that the wicked wou'd still be miserable, tho' they were there, wou'd not be able to Relish the Pleasures of it, but it would be a place of Torment to them. For since the Separation of the Soul from the Body must needs leave it in one of those conditions, of Happiness or Misery, which I have mention'd, what can we imagine is there, that should make any alteration in it? Can we suppose that God should work a Miracle in this case? Can we believe that an infinitely Good and Gracious Being will by a Miraculous Power *undo*, to the unspeakable loss of his creatures, what a long course of Piety and Vertue has *done*? that a Just and Holy God will by a Supernatural means transform a *wicked Sinner* to an *Angel of Light*? This is unreasonable and absurd. Since therefore, with-

without such a Miraculous change as this, Men will certainly find themselves in the other World in the same condition, in which *Death*, the separation of their Souls and Bodies left 'em, we must needs conclude, that our future Happiness is the *natural* effect and consequence of a Vertuous and Holy Life.

But how then, will some say, is it *the Gift of God*? How can that be said to be *freely given us* by Him, which is the *natural* Result and consequence of our Actions in this Life? Can that be the effect of God's *free Grace and Bounty*, which comes upon us, as we say, *on Course*, which the working of second causes produces? This Difficulty those, who have Excellently well prov'd the strict and intimate Connexion betwixt *Holiness* here and *Happiness* hereafter, seem not to have taken into their thoughts: This therefore I shall consider at present, and shew, that, *notwithstanding this Connexion*, our future Happiness is the *Free Gift of God*; which was the Second thing I propos'd to speak of.

I. First therefore it may be consider'd, that tho' the Happiness of the World to come be the *natural* effect of our Vertue here, yet it may notwithstanding be ascrib'd to God's
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free Grace, because he has Created us in such a manner, as to make this *dependance* and *Connexion* betwixt 'em. God is the Author of our Being, of all the Powers and Faculties of our Souls and Bodies, and consequently of all the Good effects, which *naturally* Flow from them. Now as the Benefits we receive from Men by the necessary consequence, foreseen by them, of what they do for us, may as Properly be said to be given us by them, as what they bestow with their hands: So we must esteem those things as much the Gift of God, which come to us by that *settld course* of things, which he has *order'd* and *dispos'd* for us, as those he *immediately* bestows without such a chain of Second causes.

This is much the same case, that is usually consider'd in that Famous *Question*, concerning the nature of God's Providence, which is, whether it be the Suiting the course of things to the free actions of Rational Creatures, by one *Original* act of foresight, or the making perpetual changes in it, according to mens Good or Bad behaviour. Many have thought, that the former of these Suppositions comes much to the same thing at last with the latter, and makes no difference
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even as to our *Prayers* and *Petitions* to God. They confess indeed, that if those things they Pray for were determin'd one way, without any *respect* to their Prayers, there would be no reason to Pray at all. But since they believe that, tho' God has *fix'd* 'em, yet it was done out of a *prospect* of, and with a *regard* to their Actions; and since their Prayers can *alter* nothing, even in the other account of Providence, as to the *immutability* and *prescience* of God, the duties of *Religious Worship*, they think, even in the first of these Suppositions, as well as in the second, may very well be accounted for. For thus we may conceive this matter. If I use the means, which God has appointed, in the practice of *religious Duties*, I do, by my own *Vertue*, make my self one of those, to whose *Pious endeavours* God has from all Eternity adjust'd such and such *Blessings*. If on the contrary I neglect my Duty, it is my own Fault, that I am in the number of those, to whom God from all Eternity foresaw such and such *Blessings* would not happen, in that course of things which he had settl'd, for want of their *Praying* for them. The only *difference* therefore of these two accounts of Providence seems to lye in the *different ways*, in which God may bestow upon us the *Blessings*

sings we pray for; it *may* be by a constant and uninterrupted Series of second causes, or by God's interposing from time to time, and altering the *settld course* of things: and since we need not be concern'd about the manner in which this is done, we have reason, upon either supposition, to pursue our *Duty*, being assured from the Goodness of God of a return to our *Prayers*, as well in one way as the Other. But whatever be thought of *Prayer*, yet certainly the duties of *Praise* and *Thanksgiving* are altogether as rational, upon supposing a constant *course* of things, as otherwise. For whatever kindness God in his infinite *Wisdom* and *foresight contrives* for us, and *adjusts* to us, by the Operations of second causes, is as much the effect of his *good Will* and *Bounty* to us, as that which he *immediately* bestows upon us. Hence our future Happiness, which is the *natural* effect and product of those causes, which he has *establish'd* and *set to work* in our Nature, must be esteem'd his *free Gift* to us.

We cannot indeed expect, that the Scripture should represent it as the *Gift* of God upon *this account*, that this should be so fully and explicitly declared in them. They were not intended to give us *Philosophical*
accounts

accounts of things; they deliver the Truths they contain, in such a manner, as the *generality* of Men can best receive and understand, and make such representations of them, as they are most acquainted with, and accusom'd to. Now *Gifts* and *Benefits*, we know, generally pass amongst Men by an *immediate handing* of them from one to another; they are not able, as God is, to set a long Series of second causes at work, to do kindnesses at so great a *distance*, by the *remote consequences* of things, but by an *immediate application* of their own actions. Hence when the Scriptures mention our future Happiness, and the great part God has in it, they speak of it as proceeding from him in the same manner, as *Gifts* and *Kindnesses* are dealt amongst Men, by an *immediate Donation*, tho' at the same time it be the effect of the *establish'd Laws* and *Order* of our Nature, and in that Sense is *given us* of God.

II. God has not only given us what we are to enjoy in the life to come, by establishing a *natural* Connexion betwixt *Holiness* in this world, and *Happiness* in the next, but he has likewise done so by affording us his *Grace and Mercy*, through the *mediation* of our Blessed *Saviour*, to render this
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effectual to us. And this is what the *Apostle* teaches us in the words of my Text, *Eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* For it must be Consider'd that, tho' God has framed the nature of Man in such a Manner, that *Good* and *Virtuous* actions, and *Dispositions* of Mind, do necessarily tend to make him Happy, both *here* and *hereafter*; yet the Christian Religion assures us, that we cannot *perform* these Actions, nor *attain* these Dispositions, without a *Divine assistance* and the *Operation of God's Holy Spirit* on our Souls. It is not therefore sufficient, in order to our enjoying the Happiness of *Heaven*, as the *Apostle* assures us we shall, by the *Free gift of God*, that he has constituted things in such a Manner, that a *Pious* and *Holy life* upon *Earth* does necessarily tend to produce it. It is further requisite, that he should give us that *Assistance* which we want, in order to our *leading* such a *Life* as will *Capacitate* us for it. He cannot *give* us this Happiness, according to the *Apostle's* doctrine, by making it *attainable by the means of our Vertue*, unless he enables us to *use* those means, since we cannot do so of our selves, which are *necessary to attain* it. The Scriptures therefore always describe him, as affording us his *Grace*,

and the influence of his Holy *Spirit*, to dispose us to be *Good*, and consequently *Happy*. Thus we are Taught that *he works in us both to Will and to do of his good Pleasure*. St. Paul was assured that his *Grace was Sufficient for him*, and that his *Strength was made perfect in Weakness*. And our Blessed *Saviour* tells us, that *No Man can come to him*, that is, believe the Doctrines, and obey the precepts of the Gospel, *unless his Heavenly Father draw him*. This is the representation which the Scripture constantly makes of his bestowing, as it were, through our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, *Holiness and Vertue* upon us in this World, and by consequence the *Happiness* of the Next, which *naturally* flows from them.

So likewise it is further to be observed, that the *Punishment*, which God might justly inflict upon us, for the many offences against him, which we are guilty of, would *lessen or destroy* that *Happiness*, which a Life *habitually* good, though mixt with some Sins and Frailties, which our *Pious and Virtuous* endeavours, assisted by his *Grace*, would otherwise *naturally* procure us in a future State. That *Happiness*, in a great measure,
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consists in the *Pleasure*, and *Delight*, and *Satisfaction* which *naturally* arises from a *Virtuous frame* and *temper of Soul*. And since we find by experience, in this World, that any great degree of *bodily Pain* or *Sickness*, or any other *uneasiness of Mind*, can take all *Sense* of such Happiness away; we have reason to think, that the *punishment* which our Sins have justly deserved, and the *Misery* consequent on God's displeasure, would much more do so. To the end therefore that our Piety and Goodness might produce their *natural* effects, and bring us to that happy State *hereafter*, which God has made to depend upon them, he has further granted us, through *Christ*, a Gracious pardon of our Sins. Upon these accounts our future Felicity, we see, may be justly said to be *freely given us* by him, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*, that is, God has *given us*, through *Christ*, such *assistance* of his *Holy Spirit*, as *enables* us to practise that *Virtue here*, which is the *immediate* cause of Happiness *hereafter*, and has *remitted* to us likewise, *through him*, that *punishment* of our Sins, which would have been *inconsistent* with the injoyment of it.

III. Thirdly, As God is the Author of our future Happiness, by having created us in such

a manner, that by our virtuous endeavours we shall *naturally* attain it; so the *Securing* to us the *Everlasting possession* of it so attain'd, renders it in another respect his *Gift*. And this is agreeable to the importance of the Words, which the *Apostle* uses in my Text; *Eternal Life is the gift of God*, the *continuing* of Men for ever in that State of Happiness, which their Piety and Holiness had brought them to, the *perpetuating* to 'em the enjoyment of the *Natural* Rewards of their Vertue *to all Eternity*, is another singular instance of the *Liberality* and *Bounty* of God. This is a further act of his free *Grace* and *Goodness* to us, that he has *Planted*, as it were, such *Seeds* of Eternal Happiness in us, as will *grow up to Maturity* and *Perfection* and *Ripen* into *endless Glory*, that he has not only fram'd our *Nature* so, as to contain *within it self* the *causes* of it's own Felicity, but will *preserve* ~~those~~ *those* causes, and the effects they have wrought, in being and operation *for ever*.

Now that this *Eternity* of our Happiness is wholly owing to the *free Grace* of God is evident. We cannot deduce the *necessary immortality* of the Soul from its *immaterial* nature. This indeed distinguishes it from all
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Material compositions, makes it not liable, as they are, to be destroy'd by *dissolution of parts*, and consequently we have no reason to think, that it must perish, at death, together with the body. But this gives it an advantage only over *material Beings*, not over the *matter* it self, of which they consist; which, under *some* modes or other, tho' not any *particular combinations* of them, is as *immortal* in its *Nature* as any *created spiritual Substances* are. But indeed they are none of them so at all, *independently on the Will and Power of God*. Some think, they would cease to be of themselves, if God should withdraw his *concourse* and *preservation*. Others are of Opinion, since nothing tends to its own destruction, that things once put into being would always continue in it without a *positive act* of *annihilation*. But however this be, 'tis certain, in either case, that all *created Beings*, as to the continuance of their existence, are subject to their *Creator*, the same Power that brought them out of nothing can reduce them into it again. If therefore our Souls *continue for ever*, in that State of Happiness, which their Vertue has produc'd, it is the *good Will* and *Pleasure* of God that they do so.

Nor can any thing contrary to this be infer'd from the *Wisdom*, and *Justice*, and *Goodness* of God. They may indeed *now* induce us to think, that those Souls *will* be immortal which have *suffer'd indignities* in this World, which have *struggl'd through the difficulties* of *this Life*, and, notwithstanding the *clogs and incumbrances* of the Body have *improv'd*, and *perfect'd*, and *fitted* themselves for the enjoyment of Happiness in *the Life to come*. The consideration of these things furnishes us with an argument, from the Divine attributes, *now*, which proves we *shall* be preserv'd for ever, that God *has* put things into this course and method, but not that he *must* necessarily have done so, and could not have dispos'd 'em in any other way. For as his *Wisdom*, and *Justice*, and *Goodness* is Infinite, so is his *liberty of acting* also towards his creatures. He might have created none at all, he might have made them otherwise than he has done, we see, at present, a manifest diversity amongst them, and that he has not done for many of them so much as might be, since they differ in degrees of perfection. There is nothing then in *the nature of God*, which necessarily oblig'd him to make us immortal, and it is wholly

wholly owing to his *Grace* and *Goodness*, that we *actually* are so.

Nor is there any force in that Objection, that God *must necessarily* do what is most *Wise*, and *Just*, and *Good*. For, allowing this, we may reasonably conceive there are infinitely many and various ways of making and preserving a World, which are *equally Wise*, and *Just*, and *Good*. Amongst these God may have liberty of choice, and this may reconcile his *freedom of acting* towards his creatures with the *necessity*, which flows from the perfections of his Nature. Altho' therefore in the *present State* and *Posture* of things, upon our *present experience* and *knowledge* of our Souls, we may rationally argue that we *shall* be immortal from the divine Perfections: yet since, *consistently with them*, it might have been otherwise, since there is no *necessity* of it's being so can be drawn from the *Nature* of God, we must conclude that our *eternal* Happiness, as it is *eternal*, is a singular instance of his infinite *Mercy* and *Kindness* to us.

IV. Thus far I have consider'd *humane Nature*, and the Happiness it wou'd of *it self* produce, when it is assisted by the grace of

God, and the frailties of it are pardon'd by his Mercy, and shewn how *That* proceeds from God. But there are still further considerations of moment, and importance in this argument. For as God frequently makes changes in the *Material World*, altering the Laws and Constitutions of it, for Wise and Holy Ends and Purposes, so we have reason also to believe, that he acts in the same manner, in reference to our *Souls*. In bestowing Happiness upon us in the other World, he does not confine himself to the *natural* course and order of things, he exceeds the bounds and force of second causes by *Supernatural* degrees of Glory. He purifies and exalts our Nature, raises, and increases the Powers and Faculties of our Souls, enables 'em to receive, and take in more Happiness, and fills their enlarg'd Capacities with *Extraordinary* Blessings. And this is another respect, in which *Eternal Life is the Gift of God*.

We cannot indeed doubt, but that God will deal thus with us, if we consider to what *low* and *mean* degrees our Vertue rises in this Life, and how little Happiness it *naturally* produces. The best Men perceive very much the great imperfection of those Habits they have acquir'd of *Piety* and *Holiness*, they feel

feel the Faintness, and Weakness, and frequent interruptions of that spiritual Delight, and Pleasure, which arises from them. And tho' indeed great allowance must be made for the disturbance which the Body gives the Mind in this *present State*, which will wholly be remov'd in *the next*, altho' we shall *then* much more sensibly feel the *natural* effects of a Good and Holy Life, and find them greater than we now think they are, yet, even with this consideration, we cannot imagine that *This* is all the *Happiness* we shall enjoy in *Heaven*. Especially if to this we add that *Great* and *Magnificent* representation which the Scripture makes of our future Felicity, and consider in what *sublime* and *exalted* Strains it speaks of the Joys and Glories of the World to come. The *Apostle* tells us I Cor. 2. 9. *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have enter'd into the Heart of Man the things which God has prepar'd for them that love him.* This *lofty* description of the Mystery of *Christ's* incarnation, and the *Eternal* benefits which accrue to us thereby, imports something much above the *natural* effects of *Vertue*. For *These*, it's plain, are not so far out of the reach of our *Ideas*, and Power of conceiving, Men *may* make an estimate of them, by what they feel and know of them-

themselves, allowing for the difference of this and the future State. Such *sublime* expressions therefore as these, which the *Apostle* uses in this place, shew that something *further* is intended for us, that God has *supernatural* Blessings in Store, to bestow on Good Men in the World to come.

Thus we see, that the consideration of the State and condition of *all Men* in general, and what is reveal'd to us about 'em, may incline us to think, that there will be *extraordinary* Blessings bestow'd on *all* good Men in a future State. But there are many *particular* cases, in which it seems reasonable to suppose there shou'd be such, upon account of the *Justice* and *Goodness* of God. Men differ very much, we see, in their natural Tempers and Dispositions, in their inclinations to Vertue and Vice. Whether it be the difference of their Bodies, or Souls, or both, we know not; but this is visible, that *some* may much more easily do well than *others*; *some* may become Good and Holy Men by a peculiar Happiness of Temper, by their inbred Vertuous dispositions, which *Others* cannot be without much Labor and Difficulty, much Struggle and Contest with themselves, and the Temptations
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that surround 'em. Put the Case therefore, that two such different Men shou'd attain to *equal* degrees of Goodness here, and it's evident that, if things go on only in a *natural* way, they must be *equally* Happy hereafter. But is it not Just and reasonable, that the Pious efforts and endeavours of *the one*, (which *the other* had no need of, and so did not use,) shou'd be consider'd in the Life to come? Yes certainly it is, and that he shou'd have *on that account* a greater share of God's *extraordinary* bounty, a greater measure and degree of *Supernatural* Happiness than *the other*. And this consideration may perhaps give us some ease, in thinking of God's seeming unequal dealing with Men, in things that have an influence on their Eternal welfare.

Again. Many, we see, are *afflicted*, and undergo much *Misery* in this World, whilst others are wholly exempted from it: and yet it may often Happen, that both these Sorts of Men are *equal* to one another, in the *improvements* they have made in Vertue, and consequently in the *natural* Happiness of Man. This is another Case, which seems to require a distribution of some *extraordinary* Blessings in the World to come. I confess indeed

deed, that *afflictions*, are often sent for the punishment of our Sins, they have also a tendency to *do us Good*, to *increase* our Vertue, to render us *Better* and *Holier* in our Lives than *Others*. But when Men do not, by means of them, exceed others in Goodness in this World, (as doubtless many times they do not,) since they are not at present *joyous*, but *grievous*, since they are irksom and uneasy to Flesh and Blood, they seem to deserve the consideration of a *kind* and *Merciful* God, and we may reasonably presume he will distinguish those, who suffer them well *here*, by peculiar marks of his Favour *hereafter*. And this will be further enforc'd, if we consider, how much those who are *afflicted*, and bear it well, *serve* and *benefit* the rest of Mankind. They are a warning to 'em to forsake their Sins, they afford 'em Examples of Patience, and Resignation to the Will of God, they shew, by a *sensible experiment*, that his Chastisements are tolerable, that Men need not be affrighted at 'em. And this holds true in a greater degree in *Confessors*, and *Martyrs*, and those who suffer for the Truth. *These* strengthen and confirm Mens Faith, quicken and enliven their Zeal for the Cause of God, and encourage 'em to persevere to the End in the profession of his true Religion. It is
very

very reasonable therefore to suppose, that such as *These* shall have a greater Share of *supernatural* Happiness and Glory, in the World to come, than *others*, who, tho' of *equal attainments* in Vertue, yet have not had, for the *common Good*, any such *hardships and severities* laid upon them. And this is agreeable to what *Christ* and his *Apostles* have taught us. St. *Paul* tells us, II Cor. 4. 17. that *our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding weight of Glory*: and Our Saviour bids those, who are persecuted for *righteousness Sake*, *rejoyce and be exceeding Glad, for great is their Reward in Heaven*. These expressions seem to denote, that *some* Mens future Felicity will be *increas'd*, purely upon the Score of their *afflictions*, not any *extraordinary* degrees of Vertue, which they may have procur'd'em, of which there is here no intimation. And thus the Scripture often represents our Everlasting Happiness, under the notion of a *recompence* or *retribution*, in which *amends*, as it were, or a *compensation* may be made us for our *Sufferings* in this World.

And as the future Happiness of *some* Men may be *increas'd*, above that of *Others*, upon

account of their *Sufferings* in this Life, so there are also many *peculiar* sorts of *actions*, for which they will be *distinguish'd* in the same manner and *entitl'd* to God's *extraordinary Grace* and *Favour*, in the Life to come. Such are those, as are more *peculiarly* directed to the *advancement* of his Service. Such are the Pious Endeavours that are used, to *Strengthen* and *Support* the interest of Vertue, to *discountenance* and *discourage* Immorality and Vice, to *protect* and *defend* the true Religion; such are the good Offices that are done to Mens Souls, the *reclaiming* 'em from their Errors, and their Sins, the *disposing* 'em to the practice of the Duties of a Holy and Religious Life. *Those* therefore, who have made it their Business, by such *means* as these, to *do all the Good* they can to others, whose Actions have more *immediately* tended to *promote* the Glory of God, and *advance* the interest of his Kingdom; *These*, I say, tho' they shou'd be no more *naturally* disposed for Happiness *here* than *others*, yet will doubtless receive more *distinguishing* Marks of his *supernatural* grace *hereafter*, than Those, who have been only devout, and temperate, and just, who have contented themselves with a more *retired* and *private* Vertue, and have not been so *active* and *Zealous*

ous in his *publick service*. The *Holy Apostle* tells us, II Tim. 7, 8. *I have fought a Good fight*, I have spent my Self in a continual War and opposition to the Enemies of God and Religion; *henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness*. So likewise We learn from the *Prophet* Dan. 12. 3. *They that be wise* or, as it is in the Marginal reading of our Bibles, *Teachers of others, shall Shine as the Brightness of the Firmament*, and *they that turn many to righteousness, as the Stars for Ever and Ever*.

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